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| AUTHOR | Carstens, Anne-Marie C. |
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ABSTRACT

A comparative study examined student performance attributed to the mode of literature instruction to determine the validity of increasing auditory-based learning activities in the middle school language arts classroom. Two classes of identified low-achieving students in a middle school reading program participated and were alternately assigned to read or listen to a passage during each of four lessons. Results from objective assessments, correlative writing activities, observations of on-task and off-task behavior, and surveys of students' preferences and self-evaluations were used to identify students with auditory strengths. Students who benefited from exposure to recorded literature were identified according to student preferences and objective assessments; a correlation between student behavior or writing strengths and the mode of exposure was not found. The identification of auditory-based learners, based on examples of student work and student preferences, was then used to propose a reading program that integrates the use of recorded literature. (Contains eight references, and three tables and five figures of data. Appendixes contain activity sheets, objective and subjective assessment forms, and a student self-evaluation.) (Author/RS)

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Running head: DIFFERENTIATION IN STUDENT RESPONSES TO LITERATURE

# Differentiation in Student Responses to Literature Based on Auditory versus Visual Exposure

Anne-Marie C. Carstens

University of Virginia

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Abstract

This comparative study examined student performance attributed to the mode of literature instruction in order to determine the validity of increasing auditory-based learning activities in the middle school language arts classroom. Two classes of identified low-achieving students in a middle school reading program participated in the study and were alternately assigned to read or listen to a passage during each of four lessons. Results from objective assessments, correlative writing activities, observations of on-task and off-task behavior, and surveys of students' preferences and self-evaluations were used to identify students with auditory strengths. The study identified students who benefited from exposure to recorded literature according to student preferences and objective assessments; the study did not identify a correlation between student behavior or writing strengths and the mode of exposure. The identification of auditory-based learners, based on examples of student work and student preferences, was then used to propose a reading program that integrates the use of recorded literature.

# Differentiation in Student Responses to Literature Based on Visual versus Textual Exposure

The purpose of this study was to determine whether a discernable number of middle school students identified as at-risk due to deficiencies in their reading skills can improve their performance in the language arts classroom when exposed to oral literary material in addition to printed material. Because the reading of texts among literate individuals is largely confined to visual understanding, this study is based on the concept that certain students are better auditory than visual learners and thus will attain a higher degree of success when exposed to auditory media, which can, in turn, be used to strengthen the auditory-visual correlation in the reading process.

This study comparatively examined students in two middle school reading classes in an attempt to identify students who perform better on qualitative and objective assessments or demonstrate a higher degree of on-task, proactive behavior during and after exposure to recorded selections of American literature than with traditional exposure to literature texts. The importance of such identification is to provide evidence that many older, low-achieving students with poor reading and writing skills can achieve a higher degree of success when given greater learning opportunities through listening.

There are two factors that are repeatedly identified as those which impede the progress of middle school students with

regard to reading proficiency. The first involves the cognitive difficulties, whether in the form of reading difficulties or learning disabilities, that students encounter when attempting to master the skills necessary for reading fluency and comprehension of literary works. The second factor, disinclination, is a psychological factor that particularly impedes the progress of learning at the middle school level.

Research has shown that phonemic awareness, recognition of the conceptual relationship between sounds and written words, "is a more powerful determiner than intelligence in predicting whether a student will be successful in reading" (McCormick, 1995, p. 69). In a series of studies on the deficit tradition examining the causes and differences between students with retarded acquisition of literacy skills and those students who acquire skills at a normal rate, Snowling (1990) tracked the development of children from pre-literate stages through fluency and produced diagrams of the process by which words are analyzed en route to producing a spoken response. Pre-literate children base their communication skills and beginning literacy understanding on the grammar, phonemes, and word constructions which they have heard (see Figure 1). Early literacy instruction uses this understanding to build a student's word-decoding skills, traditionally achieved through phonetic instructional methods. Using the phonetic approach to teaching reading, teachers pair different graphemes with the phonemes they represent, often through modeling of the sound association;

together these graphemes and phonemes become words recognizable through the combination of sounds produced as students become proficient in using phonological recoding skills to use sound relationships to identify words.

By the time a student reaches middle school, the relationship between the phonetic cues and symbolic representations of words should be firmly established such that a fluent reader can extract as much information from written texts as from spoken expositories (see Figure 2). For students with reading and language difficulties, however, the process of developing the sound/symbol association of language and written words is delayed or even complicated by factors such as learning disabilities. Thus, the responses generated from printed word are disparate from those generated from spoken words due to incomplete or immature sequencing and processing of semantics.

For this reason, a continued emphasis on sound-word relationships can assist in the development of a low achieving student's reading vocabulary. Carbo, Dunn, and Dunn (1986) assert that recordings of literature serve as "the raw material--the data--from which the brain can extract the patterns of printed language" (p. 118). Carbo founded a program, the Carbo Recorded Book Method, on the correlation of recorded literature and texts believing that recorded books provide a more natural situation for poor readers to relate sound-word relationships. The motivation for the implementation for the program stemmed from the knowledge that for many poor readers, "there is a

substantial lag time between when they see and say a word" (p. 118), resulting in slow, laborious reading. This lag causes students to lose meaning of text by the time they have reached the end of a passage because of the time consumed in its reading. The Carbo Recorded Book uses recorded books primarily as a tool of assisted reading, played while students follow along in a provided text.

The language immersion program, like the Carbo Recorded Book Method, is a program based on the emphasis and integration of both oral and written language in language instruction. Both programs are used most extensively in elementary reading programs and have been widely supported in practice. Chomsky (1976) and Cunningham (1988) both use the language immersion program with non-readers, using recordings to complement or follow along with the texts being used for language instruction. Students listen to recordings to increase fluency in reading before reading the story independently. The use of the recordings in instruction for the developing reader stresses phonemic awareness in increasing vocabulary, based on the principle that "word recognition and letter-sound associations are best taught by linking them with something that is already known" (McCormick, 1995, p. 487).

The use of recorded texts does more than increase a student's ability to decode and identify words, however. Cunningham (1981) details the reasons why recorded books may be beneficial to middle school students with a comprehension

ceiling, who may be able to read the words presented, but are unable to attach more than minimal meaning to complex sentences. Such students often perform well on comprehension of listening activities, but perform significantly poorer on reading comprehension activities. Thus the adoption of listening-to-reading transfer lessons in instruction can correlate the practice and strategies of comprehension in listening to those of reading. Using this approach, a student is given a particular task or purpose before listening to a passage. After completing a comprehension activity which relates to the particular task or purpose, the student is then given a written passage and given a similar task or purpose with respect to the text. This process is repeated until the student can correlate the strategies used in listening to the reading process, thus increasing comprehension of written texts.

Cunningham (1981) provides two examples of the use of recordings in middle school language arts to improve comprehension, both in a heterogeneous classroom and in a remedial reading program. Cunningham first documents the use of recordings in a heterogeneous middle school language arts classroom in a program taught by Rita Wright. Wright set up five stations in her classroom: the lexicorium, the loquorium, technicorium, graphologicorium, and the audiologicorium, each corresponding the reading, speaking, art, writing, and listening activities she conducted in her classroom. For most projects, the graphologicorium offered a series of listening-based activity

choices, including producing recordings of text, listening to recordings of text, or listening to and watching a correlative audio-visual work, such as a film or TV program. For example, for The Witch of Blackbird Pond, students were allowed to listen to the first chapter on tape, watch and critique a film on colonial life, or record the story on tape. Thus, the audiologicorium contained "both classics and student-created [recordings]" (Cunningham, 1981, p. 205), so that students had the opportunity to both listen to and to prepare listening materials for other students.

For the middle school remedial language arts, Cunningham (1981) presents the case of Reed Moore, a middle school Special Reading teacher, who uses Directed Listening Activities. The Directed Listening Activities stem from a story of appropriate difficulty read onto a tape, no segment longer than ten minutes in length. Following the listening exercise, Moore introduces new vocabulary and asks a series of true-false questions. Moore's use of recorded materials is a variation of the Directed Listening-Thinking Activity, a modification of the DRTA. The Directed Listening-Thinking Activity uses text read aloud, stopped at crucial points in the selection to solicit student predictions to increase literary comprehension (Richek, Caldwell, Jennings, & Lerner, 1996).

One undocumented case in which recorded literature is used independent of corresponding texts is in the classroom of Jane Hutchinson, a middle school language arts teacher. Hutchinson

(personal communication, March 30, 1996) began using recorded literature in 1986, while the school she taught at still required all students to take both a heterogeneously-grouped language arts class and a tracked reading class. Because the reading classes received the majority of funding for literature, Hutchinson first introduced recordings of literature as a way to integrate more literature into the classroom without using activities redundant to those used in the reading program and without receiving additional funding. Hutchinson began each class with a short period of silent reading followed by a short period of listening to recorded literature. The remaining class time was divided between grammar studies, vocabulary studies and review, and writing exercises. After using recorded books for a few years, Hutchinson began to recognize various results. First, the students she taught for both seventh and eighth grades demonstrated tremendous improvements in their listening skills, based on post-listening assessments. Second, the variation of voices, along with the expression and inflection of recorded literature, prompted students to key in to stories, even among students who were typically bored by exposure to literature. Third, students who had expressed disinterest or even aversion toward reading began to develop more positive attitudes toward literature.

To increase students' listening skills, Hutchinson begins each academic year with shorter works, playing segments no longer than five minutes each day. As the year progresses, she gauges

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the length of time for which students can concentrate, making observations to determine the limitations of students' attention spans. Then, she gradually increases both the length of the works and the segments, such that by the end of the year, students are listening to longer works, including whole novels which may span over several weeks, and may increase the duration of the listening period to as long as 15 minutes.

One of the greater criticisms of using recordings of literature, or even read-alouds, is that the use of oral narratives in the instructional environment means that the inflections and emphases of the narrator's voice inject meaning into the text (Stibbs, 1991). Hutchinson (personal communication, March 30, 1996), however, supports the argument made by Carbo (1986) that specially recorded books are crucial for youngsters who do not read fluently because "the recording does what the child is not yet able to do naturally; it verbalizes the printed words with correct pace, phrasing, and expression. Failure and frustration are minimized because recorded books provide a correct reading model for students to imitate" (p. 118).

Once failure and frustration are minimized, developing positive attitudes toward literature manifest themselves in a renewed interest in reading. Hutchinson states that students demonstrate a vigor toward the selection of texts to read because after exposure to and enjoyment of recorded texts, "it's as if the students say to themselves, 'We've had success there.' The

belligerence they've built up to reading because of what they've been exposed to in the past recedes" (personal communication, March 30, 1996).

While difficulties in the mastery of the reading process are an important factor determining the success of the student in the middle school language arts classroom, these deficiencies are often compounded by negative attitudes toward reading, usually fostered during earlier years of language instruction, like the belligerence Hutchinson describes. Such students are alliterate, or reluctant readers, rather than illiterate or preliterate (McCormick, 1995). Alliteracy increases greatly at the middle school, as middle school is the level at which students experiencing academic difficulties begin most notably to adopt apathetic and fatalistic attitudes toward school and their educations. These attitudes are compounded by the placement of poorer readers in classes with a stigma, recognized by peers as classes for low-achievers.

By increasing student success in reading and improving understanding and appreciation of literature, the integration of recorded literature can counteract some of the negative sentiments expressed by students in the middle school classroom, particularly those of lower achievers. For low achievers who have not fully mastered the reading skills necessary to perform at grade level, attempts to teach these students language and reading skills through traditional textual exposure often result in student anxiety, frustration, and negative attitudes, as such

experiences are reminiscent of earlier failures. Recorded literature, however, can expose students to literature of greater difficulty than that of their reading level without jeopardizing their understanding, as deficient readers and non-readers typically have well-developed oral language skills. In fact, McCormick (1995) contends that "to be most effective, recorded books should be above the students reading level and on, close to or even somewhat higher than the youngster's comprehension level" (p. 488).

Because students at this age have attained a higher degree of social interaction than that of younger children, their spoken vocabularies are expanding to include words not encountered in basic reading programs in elementary schools. Students who have been unable to master the word-decoding skills needed to adequately read a fifth-grade vocabulary now will experience difficulties deciphering more complex words, even though the meanings of such words fall within the understanding of their social environment. Therefore, for a majority of low-achieving students, a wide discrepancy exists between reading vocabulary and spoken vocabulary. More specifically, students whose reading is hindered by an inability to decode, identify, and understand even a fraction of the words encountered in text often have an increased understanding of spoken language, and such students can understand many words in conversation that they cannot read. The use of recorded material capitalizes on the greater understanding of oral language, and students thus attain a higher degree of

vocabulary interaction within the language arts classroom.

The data from this study attempted to gauge students' understanding of vocabulary and literary themes, interests, preferences, and strengths. Data which identified students who achieved a higher degree of success according to these criteria was then used to support the inclusion of recorded literature and other oral supplements in the language arts classroom, based on the realization that auditory-based activities can better facilitate the skills and attitudes toward reading among older students.

## Method

### Participants

The students being studied are seventh grade students in reading classes which meet during two consecutive afternoon periods. Seventh grade is the first year in the Virginia public school system where students are categorized according to their performances on the Virginia Literacy Passport Test, a state-mandated battery testing basic reading and mathematical skills. In the Charlottesville Public School System, students are placed in specially developed reading classes if they fail to pass the reading and language skills portion of the Virginia Literacy Passport Test during the spring of their sixth grade year.

### Materials

Selections used for the study are two poems, one short story, and a part of a novel. The study will begin with the

Robert Frost poem, "The Road Not Taken," and will continue with the Maya Angelou poem "Life Doesn't Frighten Me," Willa Cather's short story, "The Sentimentality of William Tavener," and a selection by Mark Twain entitled "Tom and the Loose Tooth," from The Adventures of Tom Sawyer. The selection of materials was based on material availability, length appropriate to lesson time, appropriate difficulty for students, and the cultural and chronological range represented by the works as a whole, reflective of literary styles in American poetry and fiction. All recordings were included in the materials for the Explorations in Literature reading series, copyright Scott Foresman and Company, Glenview, IL, 1988.

Procedure

This study is divided into five stages, comprised of a preliminary activity and four phases of comparative study. The preliminary activity serves as an introduction to the integration of listening to recordings in the language arts classroom. Each of the subsequent four stages is centered upon one literary selection, which one class will read and the other class will listen to, in an alternating fashion.

During the preliminary phase of the study, students hear sound clips from ten different musical selections, including opera, traditional Christmas songs, classical music, and contemporary rock. After listening to each sound clip, students will write down a noun, verb, and adjective which come to mind during each clip (see Appendix A-1). After each sound clip has

been played and students have completed their lists, each student is asked to write one word from the first item on a grid, either vertically or horizontally (see Appendix A-2). This will evolve into a class activity where students hand their grid papers to neighboring students in rotation. Whenever possible, students should write a new word from their lists which intersect words already on the grid papers been passed to them. The rotation continues, one student entering a word on the grid and passing it on to the next student, until each page has approximately ten entries. The end result of this activity is a crossword puzzle, in reverse effect. Each student is now responsible for numbering the word entries on his or her grid and composing crossword puzzle clues. During the clue composition stage of the exercise, various recordings of poems were played to provide exposure to the recording media being used in the subsequent phases.

The purpose of the preliminary activity was to introduce students both to the correlation of listening skills and written language and to provide exposure to the recording media being used in the study so that the recorded selections being used in the subsequent stages would seem less foreign to the classroom environment. As this preliminary activity differs in both form and function from the four comparative phases of the study, the only data used from this activity in the evaluation was the behavioral assessment, as this provided a baseline analysis of students' behaviors.

Stages one through four were similar to one another in

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format. First, I verbally introduced the type of selection (i.e. poem or short story). I did not provide any additional information at this time for the validity of the study, to ensure that such retention was directly linked to the student having read or heard the information. For the group reading the selection, I passed out copies of the selection to students and asked them to read the passages silently. When students had finished reading the selection, they were to turn over the pages, face down on their desks. With this cue, I came around to students as they finished, collected the selections from them, and gave them the first evaluation. For students listening to the recorded version of the selection, I waited for the attention of all students before beginning the recording. At the conclusion of the recording, I passed out to all students the same evaluation given to those students reading the selection.

The first evaluation generally required students to attempt to recall the title, author, and theme of the selection, with a few questions for students to demonstrate greater understanding of part or the whole of the selection. The second evaluation was an activity which stemmed from the format or theme of the original selection. The third evaluation, conducted after the conclusion of the fourth phase, asked students to rank their preferences and abilities with regard to reading and listening to selections. The fourth evaluation was a behavioral assessment, conducted during each lesson by the cooperating instructor. During the entirety of each lesson, the cooperating instructor

entered data into a quantitative assessment chart, evaluating each student's behavior at different intervals during the class period according to whether the student's overall behavior while observed could be classified as on-task or off-task behavior (see Appendix B). Observed on-task behaviors included displaying attentive listening or reading behaviors, raising hand to speak, asking questions of cooperative instructor, student teacher, or peers regarding material, and completing tasks as assigned. Observed off-task behaviors included talking-out, doodling during listening or reading periods, walking around room without permission or relative to task, and cheating on designated assignments. While the "appropriateness" of some behaviors may not fall within fully definable terms, I trusted the cooperating instructor's discretion in determining student behavior according to these guidelines.

Phase I of the study used the Robert Frost poem "The Road Not Taken." For Phase One, students in Group 6 listened to the selection, and students in Group 7 read the selection. At the beginning of each period, I announced that the students would first be instructed to listen to or read a short poem and would then be responsible for completing a quiz, the objective assessment (see Appendix C-1). Prior to listening to or reading the poem, however, I handed each student a quiz to preview for two minutes. The purpose of this preview was to have students clue in to the overall theme and know what information they would be responsible for identifying, as this was the first objective

evaluation they would be completing during the course of the study. The objective assessment for "The Road Not Taken" asked students to provide the title and name of the poet, to analyze and contextualize a selected passage from the poem, and to identify the choice made by the poet within the poem's overarching theme.

After the two-minute interval, I collected the quizzes from the students. A recording of "The Road Not Taken" was played twice for students in Group 6; students in Group 7 were instructed to read the poem twice. After students signaled the completion of the listening or reading activity, they were given the objective assessments again and instructed to complete the assessment to the best of their abilities. When all students were finished, I collected the assessments and handed out the guidelines for the subjective assessment.

The subjective assessment for Phase I was a correlative writing activity, and students were given the choice of three writing topics (see Appendix C-2). As some students began to finish, I signaled that two minutes were left of the free-writing time. At this designated time, I asked if any students wished to share their writing before the class, and volunteers were allowed to make a short oral presentation before the class. For the remaining class time, students continued working on their crossword clues from the preliminary activity.

Phase II of the study used the Maya Angelou poem "Life Doesn't Frighten Me." For Phase II, students in Group 6 would

read the selection and students in Group 7 would listen to the selection. At the beginning of each period, I announced that the students again would be instructed to listen to or read a short poem and would then be responsible for completing a quiz (Appendix D-1). I explained that the poem of this lesson listed a series of frightful things of which the poet claimed to not be afraid; students were instructed to write down, while listening or reading, these listed items. Students were told that the quiz would ask them to provide these items, using the contextual clues and the memory of their lists.

Students in Group 6 were instructed to read the poem one time for comprehension and a second time to write down the listed items. Students in Group 7 were instructed to listen to a recording of "Life Doesn't Frighten Me" the first time for comprehension and to list the requested items during the second playing of the recording. After students signalled the completion of the listening or reading activity, they handed in their lists and were given the quizzes. The objective assessment for "Life Doesn't Frighten Me" asked students to provide the title of the poem and name of the poet and to insert missing items within the framework of three stanzas of the poem.

The subjective assessment for Phase II was a two-fold writing activity. Students were given a list of the correct items from the objective assessment and asked to write down antonyms through word association techniques (see Appendix D-2). After writing down antonyms for the eight words, I led a

demonstration of the diamante poetic style. I first introduced the format for writing a diamante along with an example (Appendix D-3). The class then chose one word from the list provided to begin a diamante that we would write as a class. After choosing the word, students volunteered two descriptive adjectives for the second line and three descriptive verbs for the third line. I then asked for three verbs which were the opposites of the verbs listed in the third line, and these were listed on line four. The class finished the diamante by providing two adjectives for the fifth line and, finally, a noun for the sixth line. When completed, we reviewed the diamante to see if the noun on the last line could be described as having opposite characteristics from the noun listed first. After a brief discussion, students were assigned to write a diamante, beginning with one word from their lists. Students continued working on diamantes until the end of the class period.

For Phase III, the selection used was The Sentimentality of William Tavener, a short story by Willa Cather. Students in Group 6 listened to a recording of the story, and students in Group 7 read the story. I began each class period by informing students that they would be listening to a short story, composed mainly of a dialogue between two characters, and would be responsible for retelling the story orally after listening to or reading it. The retelling of the story would serve as the objective assessment (see Appendix E-1), and students were evaluated according to the number of criteria they met in their

retelling: naming the title, author, and primary characters; retelling the story with correct sequential order of events; and discriminating between the major and minor points of the story.

When students had finished listening to or reading the story, I called students individually into the hall, where I tape recorded each student retelling the story, beginning with the title and author. I did not evaluate students during recording, but rather reviewed the recordings later in order to allow students to feel greater ease while recording. While I was recording students during oral retelling, the cooperating instructor introduced the subjective assessment, a writing activity based on written dialogue (see Appendix E-2). Students were given three comic strips with the words removed. Students were to choose one comic strip and describe the situation taking place (characters, setting, expressions, etc.). Then students were to write in a plausible dialogue between the characters. Students continued working on the dialogue studies until the end of the period.

Phase IV used a selection entitled "Tom and the Loose Tooth," from the novel The Adventures of Tom Sawyer by Mark Twain. Students in Group 7 listened to the recording of the selection, and students in Group 6 read the selection. At the beginning of each class period, I introduced the selection and handed out the first part of the objective assessment. For the first part of the assessment (see Appendix F-1), students were asked to answer the following questions while listening or

reading the selection one time: Who is the main character? Who are some of the other characters in the story? What day of the week is it? What ailment(s) did the main character claim to have?

When the students were finished with the selection, I collected the answer sheets and gave students the second part of the objective assessment (see Appendix F-2). The second part asked students to provide the title and author, to define a word from the story, and to write a summary of the story. For the lesson's writing activity, I asked students to pretend that it was early Monday morning and to write down a list of excuses as to why they cannot go to school. (The plot of the selection involved Tom Sawyer trying to invent excuses as to why he was unable to go to school on a Monday morning). Near the end of each period, I asked students to share their best excuses with the class.

I met with the students for one class period following the four comparative stages of the study to administer the student self-evaluation and preference surveys (see Appendix G). Students were first asked to both rate the difficulty of listening activities and rate how they performed on listening activities as opposed to reading activities. Students were then asked to indicate their preferences for literature instruction, discriminating between poems (shorter works) and short stories (longer works).

## Results

This analysis will present data according to each of the four assessments: objective, subjective, behavioral, and student self-evaluations.

For the objective and subjective assessments, I constructed charts for each group, dividing the Phases according to the mode of exposure, listening or reading (see Tables 1 & 2). For objective assessments, I listed the number possible, then recorded both the number of correct items and the percentage of correct responses for each student. (For assessments not completed due to student absence, I recorded a hyphen in the appropriate box(es).) Below each chart, I summarized the data by presenting the class mean of the objective assessments for each phase. The subjective assessments, or correlative writing activities, were each evaluated on a scale of one to five.

According to the objective assessments, the strength of performance among students who listened to the selections was correlative to the length of the selection (see Figure 3). For Phase I, students who listened to the selection performed just above those in the reading class, with a class average of 43.3% correct, compared with an average of 42.2% among those in the Reading class.

For each of the other selections, the students reading the selections outperformed those in the listening class. In Phase II, the percent-correct among the listening class, 68%, was close to that of readers, 74%. The selection for Phase II, Maya Angelou's "Life Doesn't Frighten Me," with a recording time of

2:00, however, was nearly twice as long in recording time as Robert Frost's "The Road Not Taken," with a recording time of 1:10. The greatest disparity among the scores of the readers and of the listeners occurred in Phase III, with Willa Cather's "The Sentimentality of William Tavener," with a recording time of 13:50. The gap between the listening and reading scores decreased in Phase IV, using Mark Twain's "Tom and the Loose Tooth", with a recording time of 7:25.

There was no determined correlation between the student performances on the subjective assessments or preferences with regard to the mode of exposure. Students who tended to perform well on writing activities did so whether exposed to either medium. Where differences existed, there was no substantive enough evidence to link these to the mode of exposure, but rather these few discrepancies were attributed to student interest in topic, performances relative to mood, or to strengths in different kinds of writing activities. According to data collected from student surveys, there was great variation among students' preferences for either reading or listening to literature (see Table 3). The substantial number of students who indicated a preference for listening in the classroom or assessed their own listening abilities as better than reading abilities provided further evidence that listening activities can increase student attitudes in the reading classroom.

According to data accumulated from behavioral observation logs, students in the listening groups were neither more nor less

inclined to display off-task behavior. Behavioral patterns seemed to be student-specific, with the same students tending to show characteristic on- or off-task behaviors.

The data was also used to identify individual students who performed above or near the class mean on assessments following listening activities but substantially lower on reading assessments Two students, Student A and Student B, were both students in the seventh period and were identified as auditory-based learners (see Figure 4). This strength greatly contrasted with the strength of Student C, also a student in the seventh period, as determined by data from objective assessments. By charting the scores of Student A and the scores of Student C, the decline of Student A in the reading exercises greatly contrasted the increased performance of Student C (See Figure 5). However, the majority of students in both classes could not be conclusively identified as either auditory-based or visual-based learners according to the assessments of this study.

## Discussion

Despite the fact that readers outperformed listeners in three of the four phases of the study according to objective assessments, this study provided evidence of the benefits afforded some students when using recorded literature in the middle school language arts classroom. First, students in these classes had not been trained in learning from and responding to recorded literature in a middle school language program, yet beginning with short passages or poems, students listening to

recorded literature were as able or better able to remember key facts and ideas as those students reading text. The success of students in the first phase proves the ability of students to effectively learn from this format, particularly since these students had never before been accountable for understanding of literature using an auditory medium in any middle school language arts program.

Second, due to the lack of training and exposure to recorded literature, students' difficulties increased as the length of the selection increased. Students beginning a recorded literature immersion program, however, must first adapt to the use of shorter selections, and only after repeated exposure should the difficulty and duration of listening selections be increased. Due to the time limitations of this study, students were exposed to longer and more difficult passages after only a brief exposure to short works. (Remember that each group was responsible for listening to only two selections and was therefore responsible for understanding a significantly longer selection after only one prior lesson of exposure through listening.) With increased integration and daily use of recorded text, along with more focused training on oral understanding of literature, students become better suited to the use of longer selections through the recorded medium. That students failed to perform superbly on longer recorded selections after only one prior exposure to recorded medium should not persuade a stance that students would still be unable to understand longer selections given greater

exposure and training.

The use of recorded literature also had no adverse effect on the quality of writing or on the behaviors of students such that the disadvantages of its use with regard to lesson activities or classroom management outweighs its advantages in catering to the needs of students with greater auditory skills. The students who benefit greatly from exposure to recorded literature can thus be given varied opportunities, without creating an atmosphere detrimental even to visual-based learners. Visual-based learners also can increase their listening skills through exposure, even if it not the mode of exposure better suited to them.

Based on the findings of this study, I propose that recordings of literature be used on a regular basis in the middle school language arts classroom. At the beginning of the academic year, shorter selections, such as poems, passages, and fables, should be used to indoctrinate students with the methodology of listening and with auditory understanding. Selections should be played before the whole class, just as all students read or perform the same writing activities during different segments of the class period. After students have proven mastery of shorter forms, the teacher can begin to use longer selections continued over several days or even weeks. This process of story continuation allows the teacher to begin using longer stories and full-length novels which can then be correlated to the process of continuation in reading. Students may be responsible for writing down what they have read the day before in reading logs, after a

daily reading period, just as they are responsible for retelling what has happened in the plot of a recorded selection. As students become more adept and better trained with the use of recordings of literature in the classroom, the teacher may extend the listening period, being careful to monitor student response and on-task behavior such that the listening time does not extend beyond students' threshold for oral understanding.

The use of recorded literature in the classroom should not supersede the teaching or learning of reading skills, nor should recorded literature be a substitute for real texts. Rather, recorded literature is a means of varying the media students are exposed to with regard to language and can help unskilled readers key in to word patterns and vocabulary that give them difficulty in the reading process. The ultimate goal of the use of recorded literature is to increase the interest and success of students in literature such that they become self-motivated, independent readers.

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Table 1

Group 6 scores on objective assessments (Assessment A) and subjective assessments (Assessment B).

## *Listening exercises*

| | Assessment A | | | | Assessment B | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Phase I | | Phase III | | Phase I | Phase III |
| Student initials | (10 possible) | % correct | (18 possible) | % correct | (on scale 1-5) | (on scale 1-5) |
| SV | 4 | 40 | 3 | 16.7 | 4 | 4 |
| CM | 9 | 90 | - | - | 4 | - |
| JW | 2 | 20 | - | - | 2 | - |
| AL | 4 | 40 | 15 | 83.3 | 5 | 5 |
| EJ | 3 | 30 | 2 | 11.1 | 3 | 3 |
| CD | 4 | 40 | 2 | 11.1 | 4 | 4 |

Class mean for objective assessments:

Phase I Assessment A: **4.2/42.2%** Phase III Assessment A:**9.3/51.9%**

## *Reading exercises*

| | Objective assessments | | | | Subjective assessments | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Phase II | | Phase IV | | Phase II | Phase IV |
| Student initials | (18 possible) | % correct | (10 possible) | % correct | (on scale 1-5) | (on scale 1-5) |
| SV | 16 | 88 | 16.5 | 82.5 | 4 | 4 |
| CM | 18 | 100 | - | - | 5 | - |
| JW | 10 | 55 | - | - | 3 | - |
| AL | 10 | 55 | 17 | 85 | 5 | 4 |
| EJ | - | - | 14 | 70 | - | 5 |
| CD | 13 | 72 | 17.5 | 87.5 | 5 | 4 |

Class mean for objective assessments:

Phase I Assessment A: **13.4/74%** Phase III Assessment A:**16.25/81.25%**

Table 2

Group 7 scores on objective assessments (Assessment A) and subjective assessments (Assessment B).

*Listening exercises*

| | Assessment A | | | | Assessment B | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Phase II | | Phase IV | | Phase II | Phase IV |
| Student initials | (18 possible) | % correct | (20 possible) | % correct | (on scale 1-5) | (on scale 1-5) |
| RJ | 14 | 78 | 13.5 | 67.5 | 5 | 5 |
| JW | 15 | 83 | 14 | 70 | 3 | 4 |
| SB | 12 | 67 | 12 | 60 | 5 | 4 |
| AA | 13 | 72 | 16 | 80 | 3 | 5 |
| TM | 12 | 67 | - | - | 4 | - |
| MW | 11 | 61 | 15.5 | 77.5 | 4 | 4 |
| DB | 9 | 50 | 13.5 | 67.5 | 4 | 2 |
| CM | 14 | 78 | 12.5 | 62.5 | 3 | 4 |
| JJ | 10 | 55 | 15.5 | 77.5 | 4 | 4 |
| Class mean for objective assessments: Phase II Assessment A: **12.2/68%** Phase IV Assessment A:**14.1/70.3%** | | | | | | |

*Reading exercises*

| | Objective assessments | | | | Subjective assessments | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Phase I | | Phase III | | Phase I | Phase III |
| Student initials | (10 possible) | % correct | (18 possible) | % correct | (on scale 1-5) | (on scale 1-5) |
| RJ | 4 | 40 | 2 | 11.1 | 5 | 4 |
| JW | 3 | 30 | 8 | 44.4 | 5 | - |
| SB | 7 | 70 | - | - | 2 | - |
| AA | 5 | 50 | 8 | 44.4 | 4 | 5 |
| TM | 1 | 10 | - | - | 2 | - |
| MW | 5 | 50 | 18 | 100 | 2 | - |
| DB | 3 | 30 | - | - | 3 | - |
| CM | 1 | 10 | 2 | 11.1 | 4 | - |
| JJ | 9 | 90 | 18 | 100 | 4 | 4 |
| Class mean for objective assessments: Phase I Assessment A: **4.2/42.2%** Phase III Assessment A:**9.3/51.9%** | | | | | | |

Table 3

Student self-evaluations and preferences according to results from student survey, divided according to question and group. subjective assessments (Assessment B).

| | Strongly Agree /Agree | | Strongly Disagree /Disagree | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 6 | 7 | 6 | 7 |
| I **like** listening to poems and stories **more than** I like reading them. | 75% | 33% | 25% | 67% |
| I think that it is **more difficult to listen** to a poem or short story than to read one. | 50% | 89% | 50% | 11% |
| I **remember more facts** (title, author, characters) when I listen to poems and stories than when I read them. | 100% | 33% | 0% | 67% |
| I **understood the themes** of the poems and stories better when I heard them than when I read them. | 50% | 33% | 50% | 67% |

| | Read | | Listen | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 6 | 7 | 6 | 7 |
| If you had a choice to read or listen to **a poem**, which would you choose? | 25% | 55% | 75% | 45% |
| If you had a choice to read or listen to **a short story**, which would you choose? | 50% | 45% | 50% | 55% |

Figure Captions

Figure 1. The language understanding system of a pre-literate child. From "Dyslexia in Childhood," by M. Snowling, 1990, in P.D. Pumfrey & C.D. Elliott (Eds.), Children's Difficulties in Reading, Spelling, and Writing, (p. 127). Copyright 1994 by Falmer.

Figure 2. System for understanding of written language characterizing the proficient reader. From "Dyslexia in Childhood," by M. Snowling, 1990, in P.D. Pumfrey & C.D. Elliott (Eds.), Children's Difficulties in Reading, Spelling, and Writing, (p. 127). Copyright 1994 by Falmer.

Figure 3. Class means according to percentage of items correct on objective assessments.

Figure 4. Performance levels of Student A and Student B, who demonstrated auditory strengths according to objective assessments. The percentages of items correct for Students A and Student B are compared with the class mean in both listening and reading activities.

Figure 5. Performance contrast of Student A (auditory-strength) with Student C (reading strength) according to objective assessments.

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Figure 2

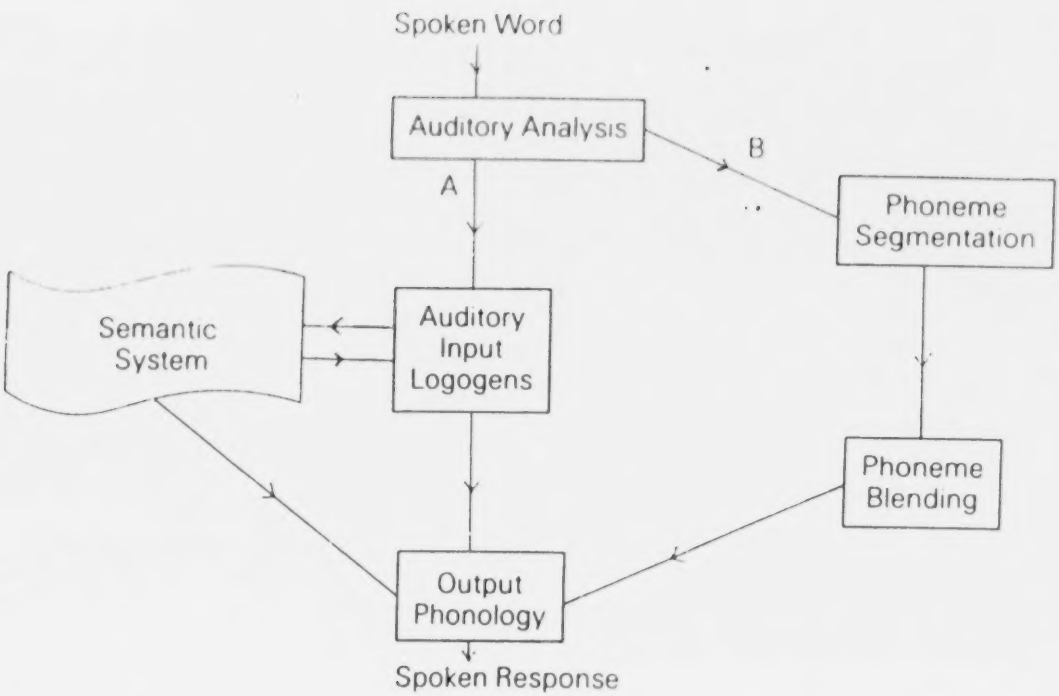
Spoken Word
Auditory Analysis
A
B
Phoneme Segmentation
Semantic System
Auditory Input Logogens
Phoneme Blending
Output Phonology
Spoken Response

Figure 3

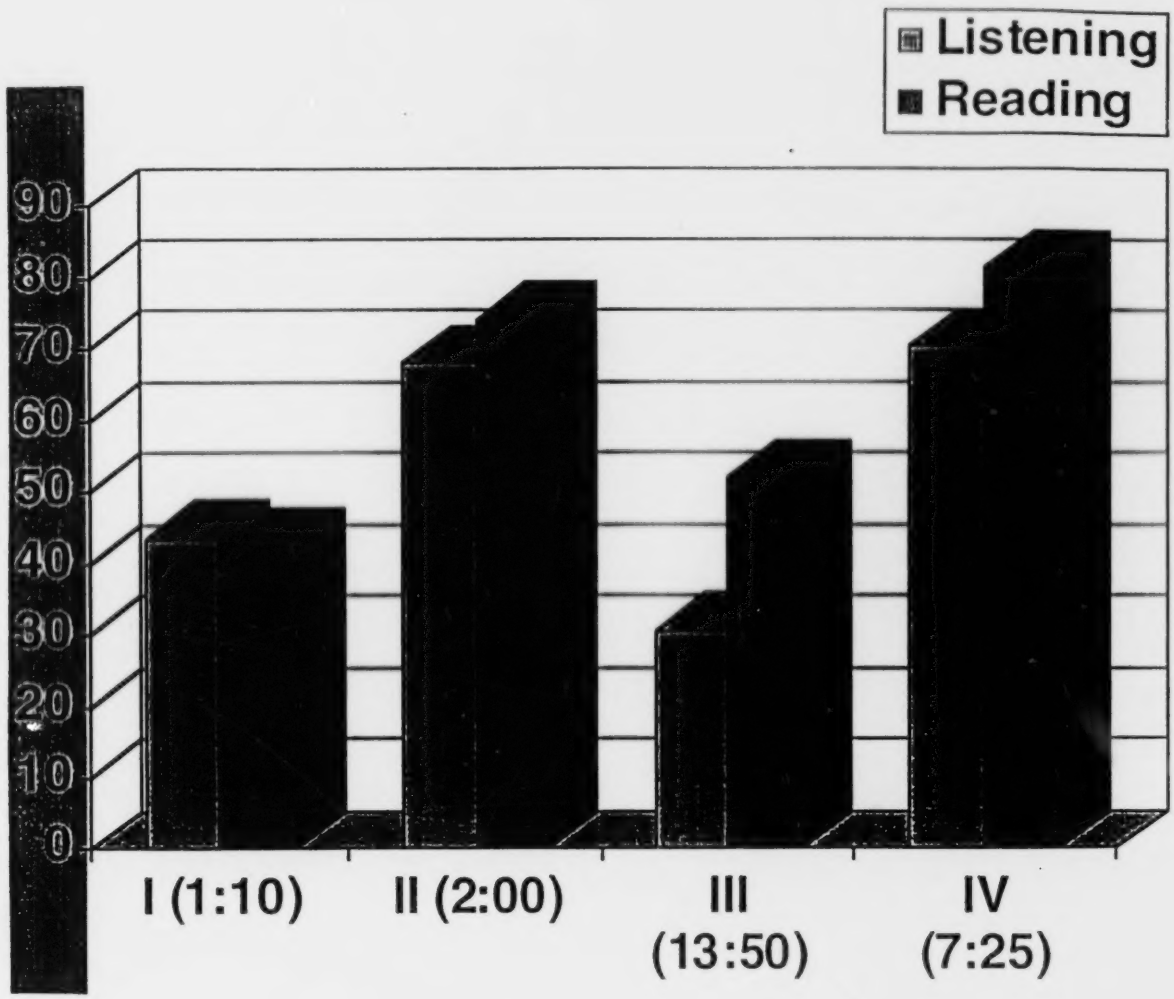


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Figure 4

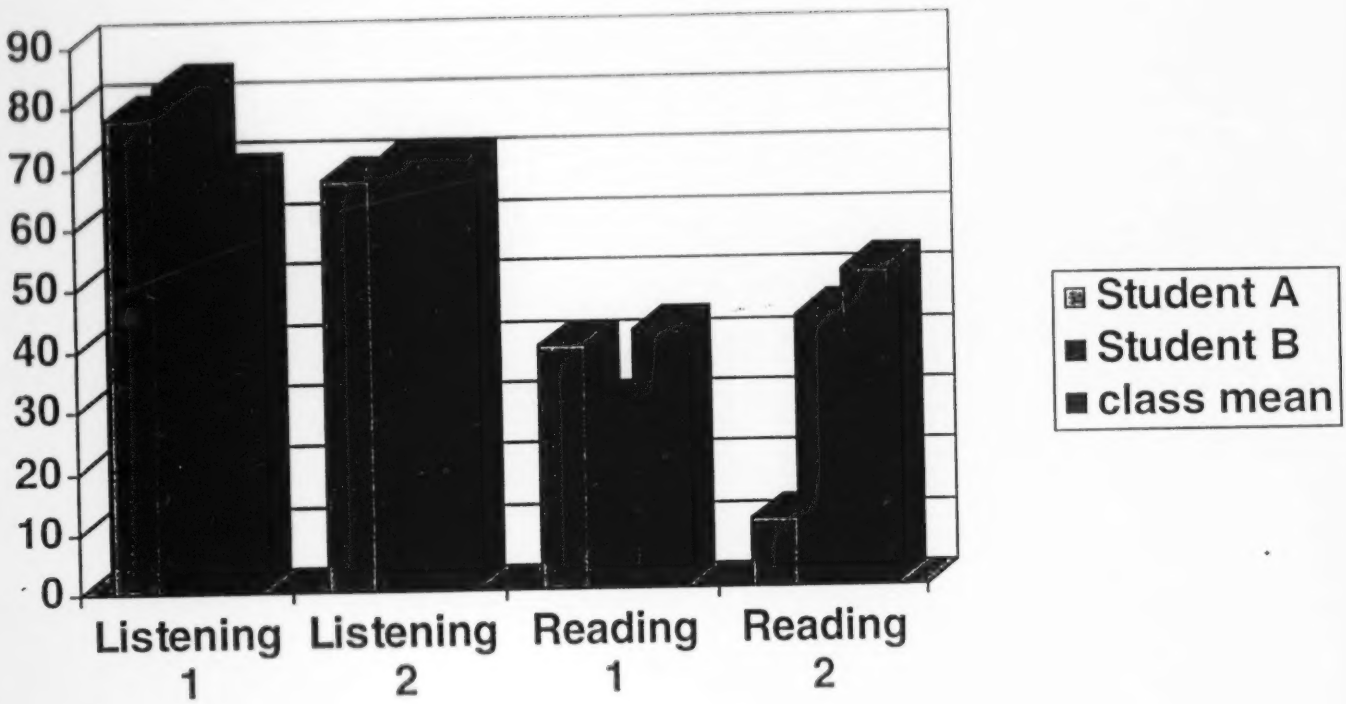


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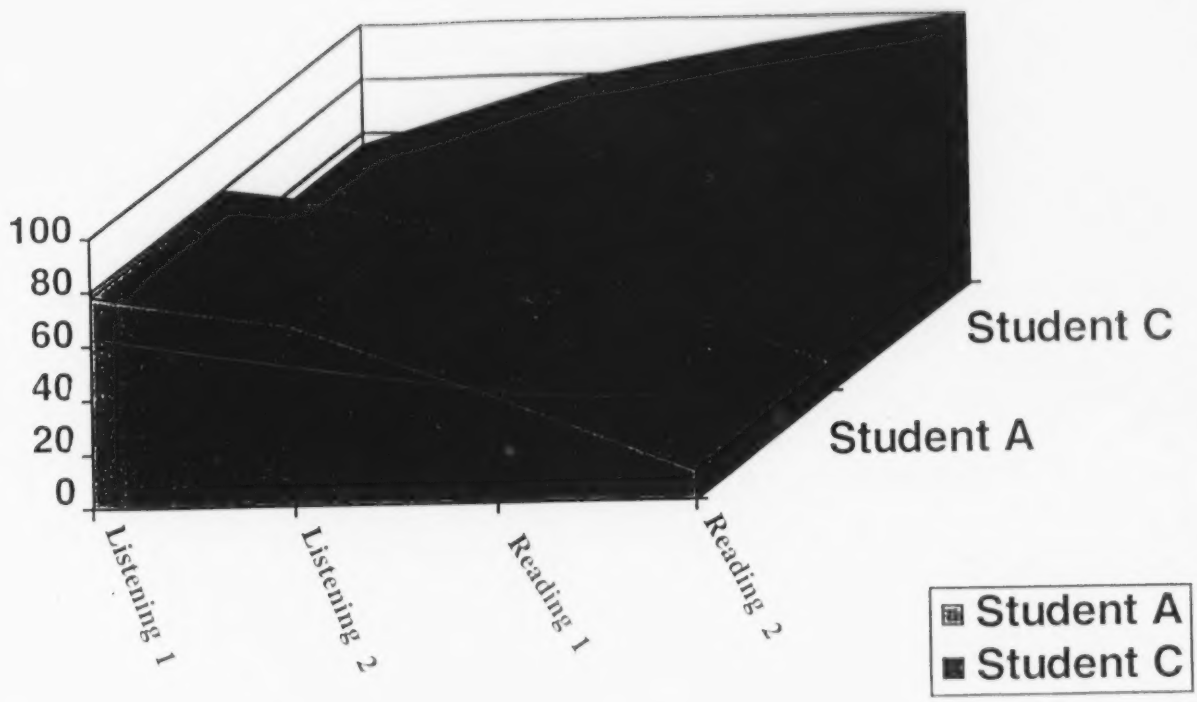
Figure 5

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Appendix A-1

Activity sheet for listing word associations for sound clips.

# Listening & Literature

**Directions:** 1. Listens to the recorded "clips" of music
2. Circle whether the clip is familiar to you
3. Write down a noun, verb, and adjective which come to mind as a response to each clip

1. Do you know the clip? Yes No
NOUN:
VERB:
ADJECTIVE:

2. Do you know the clip? Yes No
NOUN:
VERB:
ADJECTIVE:

3. Do you know the clip? Yes No
NOUN:
VERB:
ADJECTIVE:

4. Do you know the clip? Yes No
NOUN:
VERB:
ADJECTIVE:

5. Do you know the clip? Yes No
NOUN:
VERB:
ADJECTIVE:

6. Do you know the clip? Yes No
NOUN:
VERB:
ADJECTIVE:

7. Do you know the clip? Yes No
NOUN:
VERB:
ADJECTIVE:

8. Do you know the clip? Yes No
NOUN:
VERB:
ADJECTIVE:

9. Do you know the clip? Yes No
NOUN:
VERB:
ADJECTIVE:

10. Do you know the clip? Yes No
NOUN:
VERB:
ADJECTIVE:

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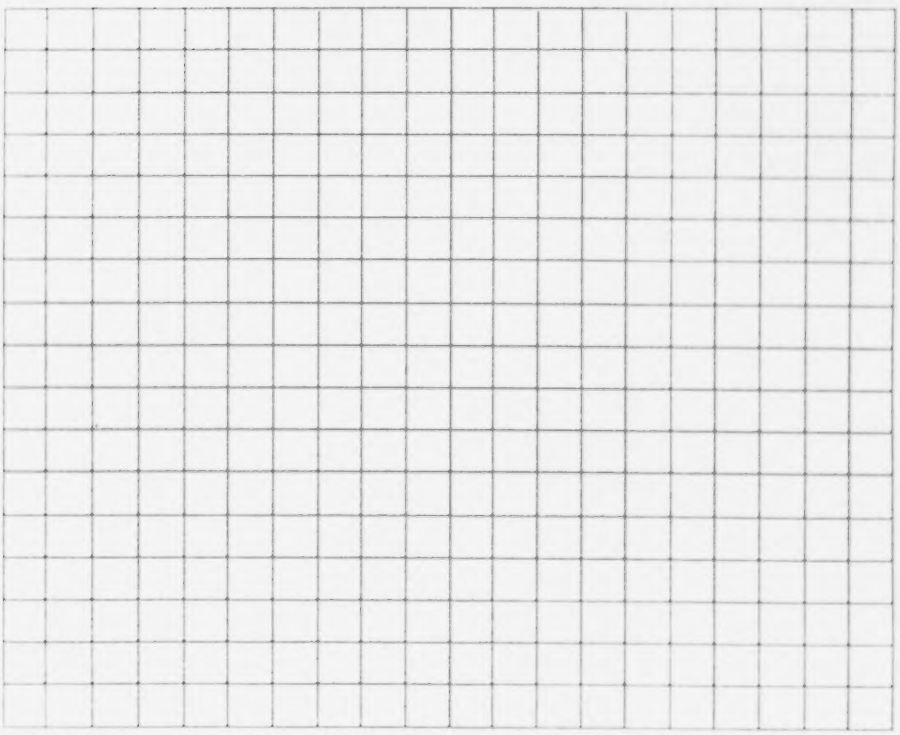
Appendix A-2

Grid paper for writing in list words in rotation.

# Listening & *Literature*

## Create-A-Crossword



Appendix B

On-task and off-task behavior log sheet

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# Literature Links

What was the title of the poem? _____

Who is the poet? _____

Where does the poem take place? _____

The poet is making a decision and is *relaying* his thoughts to us in the process. The poet writes:

> *Then took the other, as just as fair,*
> *And having perhaps the better claim,*
> *Because it was grassy and wanted wear;*

Of what is the poet speaking?

_____

_____

What decision is the poet trying to make?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

What is the poet's choice?

_____

_____

# Literature Links

Choose one of the following topics to write about. As you write, think about how each of the topics relates to the poem you just listened to or read.

1) Imagine that you have been transformed for a day into the animal of your choice. Try to think of a decision that the animal must make. Describe the setting and recreate the thoughts of the animal as it goes about making its decision. Be creative--it can be as simple as a monkey trying to choose between two bananas or as fun as an alligator trying to decide what to dress up as for the Costume Ball.

2) In a journal entry, write about all the decisions you have made since the time you woke up this morning. Try to include all the decisions you made without really thinking about them *consciously*, such deciding whether or not to turn off your alarm, deciding whether to get out of bed, etc.

3) *The Road Not Taken* is a poem about an experience in nature. Write a nature poem, making sure to describe your natural surroundings (mountains, parks, rivers, oceans, beaches, fields, etc.) and your responses and reactions to those surroundings.

Appendix D-1

Objective assessment, Phase II.

# Literature Links

Who is the poet? _____

Title: _____

_____ on the wall
_____ down the hall
Life doesn't frighten me at all.
_____ _____ barking loud
_____ _____ in a cloud
Life doesn't frighten me at all.

Mean old _____ _____
_____ on the loose
Life don't frighten me at all.
_____ breathing flame
On my counterpane
That doesn't frighten me at all.

_____ _____ in a fight
All along at night
Life doesn't frighten me at all
_____ in the park
_____ in the dark
No, they don't frighten me at all

Appendix D-2

Activity sheet for word association, Phase II.

# Antonyms through Word Associations

For each of the following words, list something that has **opposite characteristics**.

Examples:

Circus:

Elephant:

Daytime:

1. Shadows:
2. Noise:
3. Dogs:
4. Ghosts:
5. Lions:
6. Dragons:
7. Tough guys:
8. Snakes:
9. Darkness:
10. Clouds:
11. Screams:
12. Ocean:

Appendix D-3

Subjective assessment, Phase II.

# Literature Links

## Diamantes

| | |
|---|---|
| **noun**<br>**describing, describing**<br>**action, action, action**<br>**change in opposite direction**<br>**action, action, action**<br>**describing, describing**<br>**noun** | Example: Thanksgiving<br>bountiful, plump<br>feasting, gorging, celebrating<br>fasting, starving, wanting<br>scarce, emaciated<br>famine |

Link

Carstens/Field Project

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Appendix E-1

Oral retelling checklist for objective assessment, Phase III.

*The Sentimentality of William Tavener*

Student:
Period:

Assessment chart for oral retelling of literature

| **Criteria** | **Points awarded** |
|---|---|
| Naming title (2 points) | |
| Naming author (2 points) | |
| Identifying primary characters (4 points) | |
| Proper sequencing of story events (5 points) | |
| Discrimination between minor/major events (5 points) | |

Appendix E-2

Written dialogue activity sheet for

subjective assessment, Phase III.

# Create-A-Comic

Review the comic which appears at the bottom of the page. Imagine what might be happening in the scene and answer the following questions.

1. **What is the setting?**

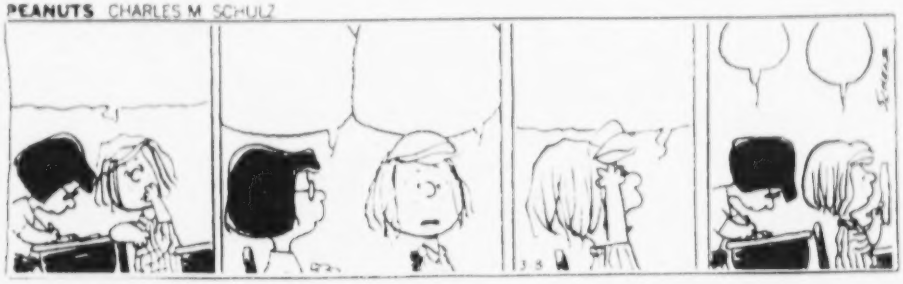
2. **Who are the characters and what is their relationship to one another?**

3. **What moods or emotions are the characters expressing?**

4. **What might the characters be talking about?**

5. Write a paragraph describing what is happening.

6. Now, write in the dialogue between the two characters which reveals the situation you have just described.

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Appendix F-1

Objective assessment, Part I, Phase IV.

# Literature Links

Who is the main character?

Who are some of the other characters in the story?

What day of the week is it?

What ailment(s) did the main character claim to have?

Appendix F-2

Objective assessment, Part II, Phase IV.

# Literature Links

1. What is the title of the story?

2. Who is the author?

3. In the story, the following sentence occurs:

> *[H]e was the envy of every boy he met because the gap in his upper row of teeth enabled him to expectorate in a new and admirable way.*

What does ***expectorate*** mean?

4. Retell the story in your own words. Be as specific as possible, including the names of characters, the correct sequence of events, etc.

Appendix G

Student self-evaluation and preference surveys.

# Literature Links

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| I **like** listening to poems and stories **more than** I like reading them. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| I think that it is **more difficult to listen** to a poem or short story than to read one. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| I **remember more facts** (title, author, characters) when I listen to poems and stories than when I read them. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| I **understood the themes** of the poems and stories better when I heard them than when I read them. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| If you had a choice to read or listen to **a poem**, which would you choose? | Read | Listen |
| If you had a choice to read or listen to **a short story**, which would you choose? | Read | Listen |

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